

BEWARE OF NEW EVANGELICAL POPULARIZERS

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In *New Neutralism II: Exposing the Gray of Compromise*, author John Ashbrook includes a chapter titled "The Popularizers." He deals with such evangelical icons as John MacArthur, Luis Palau, E.V. Hill, Charles Colson, Charles Stanley, Charles Swindoll, Bill Hybels, Bill Gothard, and Warren Wiersbe. Consider what Ashbrook has to say about these popular men:

"Not long ago I found myself in conversation with a fellow pastor who had formerly been a leader in the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches and had served on the Council of Eighteen. As we discussed the position of two of the prominent schools in that movement, I asked my friend, 'What factors were influential in moving those institutions from a fundamentalist stance to the new evangelical position?' He did not hesitate in his reply, 'The two most important factors were the use of contemporary Christian music and the use of a group of popular new evangelical speakers without any warning about their dangerous position.'

"...any movement must have its popularizers who take the principles of the movement to preach in its pulpits and practice before its people. New evangelicalism has such a coterie. Most of them are good theologians, excellent preachers and communicators with natural charisma. Schools, churches and conventions book them because they are good. Their major failing is that they move from the fundamentalist orbit, to National Council of Churches pulpits, to Southern Baptist gatherings, to new evangelical schools and charismatic conventions. Their *modus operandi* is to go wherever they are invited. This, of course, is in keeping with Dr. Ockenga's new evangelical prerequisite of repudiating Biblical separation. THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE MOVEMENT COMES NOT SO MUCH FROM WHAT THEY SAY AS FROM WHERE THEY GO.

"As they move from school to school the popularizers soften the attitudes of impressionable young people. Many of us remember sitting in college chapel and considering as spiritual heroes those who spoke in the pulpit. Because we got a blessing from the speaker we assumed that wherever he spoke must be all right. Every pastor learns that he must be careful where he goes, for his actions sanctify that place for his people.

"THE PRESENCE OF THE POPULARIZERS, WITHOUT PROTEST, IN DUBIOUS PLACES, VITIATES THE INFLUENCE WHICH THEY MIGHT HAVE FOR GOOD. These speakers could do a world of good for the stand of friends if they had the courage to say, 'No, I cannot speak for you as long as you remain in the National Council or the Southern Baptist Convention.' They could do a world of good by saying, 'I do not believe the charismatic movement is Scriptural and I cannot speak with charismatics.' I have a hunch that some of these popularizers feel as uncomfortable in

the company they keep as Jehoshaphat did in the company of Ahab's false prophets. What a difference there would have been in Jehoshaphat's story had he had the courage to stand and say, 'I do not belong in this company, and I am leaving.' He would have done a world of good for his own nation and for other onlookers. [Fundamental Baptist Information Service editor: This would also have done a world of good for the faithful prophet Micaiah!]

"I am sure that some of my readers will want to say to me, 'You are another Joe McCarthy, dealing in guilt by association.' (Poor Joe, resurrected again!) THE FACT REMAINS THAT WHOM I SPEAK WITH, WHOM I SPEAK FOR AND WHOM I HAVE IN MY PULPIT INDICATES WHAT I BELIEVE. Every faithful pastor will make some mistakes in this area. I have not mentioned men who have made mistakes. I have cited only those who have made such mistakes an official policy."

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